

initiation

A short story by Myjoy Jeremiah Harper

### The early Protestant Church of England

maintains settlements, and by which, influence in the colonies. Most of these settlements maintain housing and educational employment systems for devotees and potential devout sisters to the settlement. All of which are women of the church. Sisters. If not an English, Spanish, and less often European sister of long dedication or regard, a resident is either voluntarily or involuntarily reforming.



## Chapter I

Gazing. In complete opposition to the prospect and concept of inattention as his sight touches me, then breaks skin, then they are, as his eyes: reading the stringed scripture of my heart's thousand veins. Delicate empathy, blank pages. To breathe now is to fill this room with vapor, red vapor like wine and blood. Therefore as we breathe, as we gaze; we grow livelier and more drunk. Thumping and echoing. To my fingertips which straighten and spread or my eyes which fill and fog. Embrace me! Embrace me wholly! Let me swallow you, sink my teeth in your skin and ingest you! I want to be a glutton, consume until i can no longer think. Have me thoughtless, free me from conscience, and give me transcendence in euphoric exaltation! Touch me. Touch me. Touch me. Warmer. Touch me. Low sirens rain in my head. Is this transcendence? It can't be disappointment. I am indifferent, my shoulder and wrist are sore. I throb. I lie, I lie. The warmth comes in waves, not just warmth I should say. The minuteness of sensation, all my veins and hairs reduced to a sort of white noise, just as simplified are my thoughts. Weightless then aware, unaware then heavy. Heavy as all hell, hell bloody hell. The ocean of ash, him and his scorched corpse. Oh god oh god oh god! him and all his sweetness, my angel, my dear horizon. So distant I only whisper. "come to me" it's impossible, absolutely impossible. I'll never have him. Though I can.

It cannot be impossible. Love conquers all does it not? This feeling, love? Conquers me and as I am my life and my life is my all until all else; it conquers all. Truly. Truly. Truly selfish, strike my hands. Be that by wood board, saint mary. Here I sin. How idiotic, how hedonistic. Oh god oh god oh god! Stupid, irreparably stupid, absolutely and irrevocably stupid. Where am i? oh, yes. My room, bound to berth in this stone vessel. Yes, with warm white bedress, sheets to match— like the clouds and these very walls, a pillow, birch bed frame. Yes. I'm here! And he's not. That fact, it's. absolutely woeful. I cannot escape it.

*So the series of touches, sequence of touch, signal to terror. She goes and goes feeling those*

*waves, waves of warmth— explosive hind fore. Right left, in her knee, in her thigh to her teeth.*

*Humming the tune of his hips or his lips as she lies, internally cries, locked lids upon eyes.*

And his face. without description. let me think. there it is! Within godly light and all holy luminescence. It appears, disappears. Why do you leave me? Why must you go and fight like some man? Why must you come and lie like some man? You horror! You mule, virulent cadger!

*And just as she curses, deep, far in thought, unmoving as if rot -enraged by dreams it seems to have bought her time and awareness. That of sound, talking and walking, closer and nearer. Dead at her door. "Sister, be on to yon circle, though the weather be poor." She replies: "yes sister" lightly landing on the floor.*

I can't go on living this way. not this lie, o heavenly father! I clasp my hands in yours though I do not feel them. I can hardly— I eventually fail to receive an answer for why I cling to this dream.

*Down the corridor, up the stair and into the hall- where the sun would join all if not within thick white shroud. How loud the brass bell and the wind will through windows, it's made their black dresses lightly anatomical with unruly motion. Somehow stillness takes hold over the commotion.*

"Now Isaac was old" I can see him, in his dry disclose with that sagging sight, knowing life. "And his eyes were dim, and he could not see: and he call'd esau" I can see him, tall, looking down on his father though never above him. "His elder son, and said to him: my son? and he answer'd: Here I am. Here I am. And his father said to him, thou seest that I am old, and know not the day of my death. take thy arms, thy quiver, and bow, and go abroad; and when thou hast taken something by hunting, make me a savory meat thereof"

*Sister Maryanne at the helm of the white hall lets silence dissipate a swarm, bowing and thin as the following scripture is sung: "and she gave him the savory meat, and deliver'd him bread that she had baked. Which when he had carried in, he said: my father? but he answer'd: I hear. Who art thou, my son? And Jacob said: I am Esau, thy firstborn: I have done as thou didst command me." The coven is torn, with their hearts where their hands be, as if coaxing their souls toward the word. "Our problems are man-made therefore they may be solved by man."*

Belief. Belief is truth. Belief is love of proposition, be it true or false. Belief is wholly giving in to what may or may not be. Do I doubt him? Do I doubt this lord that makes and shakes each growth of grass all round the world, this lord that gives of me flesh and blood, this lord that hold me dearer than I dare to be held?

*With a focused, yearning gaze toward the stone figure of Christ himself. Unnoticed, burning  
malaise at the sight of the suspended heavenly father.*

His body. frozen. It's suddenly oh so cold. Am I so empathetic as to conjure myself a statue? Am I so pious as to believe my discomfort means anything at all? Am I so vain as to think only of myself? Ah! With that, I'm reminded of why I'm here. The path to selflessness. the path to unison. The path to god. And I feel. I feel he's oh so close. So very close, almost touching me. Fingers pierce out from nothing and so delicately as to not even graze my thin hairs. Feeling and knowing me. Father. Hold me close. If only some confinement to define that, if only you'd pick a pair of hands.

*Utter defeat seeps into the woman, a maudlin sense of all times tense.*

The prerequisites for hibern supper have been met, six in the afternoon. A walk to town hall, down the hill. Lambs grazing and roaming in low-heeled leather shoes and dragging drapes. I think 'the lord is my shepherd' and it takes on a trivial and hostile connotation. When the sun peers in from the caustic confines of oil and wool, that cloud, that haze-- it brushes all creation with fibrous strands of white heat and cleanses the land of some sinister plague. I am safe so long as his light meets the soil.

*To the town hall, the bronzed decay of the land remains from fall, all's winter seeps slow, no brown glow, carefully perched, be the crow staring blankly. Called thee, sister ingred, quaintly, she'd say: faintly, you can still see color; the hibern landscape be far, far duller.*

Down the hill and into town. As the prerequisites have been fulfilled, so will be the lone requisition. a pitter patter sort of heart skip comes over me, as we enter from the alley between ben stanton's carpentry and helen and james culler's bread oven where the burnt wood blooms an aroma reminiscent of incineration's end— like there's nothing left to burn, soon disproven.

pre

The following was written in a fit  
of passion and intoxication:



*[The handwriting is extremely cursive and illegible.]*

[illegible]

around him is  
 sisterhood  
 where they  
 great love  
 grace in heart  
 off before supper  
 had good time  
 hungry  
 it's been kept  
 she'll be  
 has to  
 her.

post

The preceding tells of observations leading  
to and during dinner at the town hall.

Not concerned at all that he lingers, that he haunts. Happily, merrily quaintly she flaunts her saintly ungainly response to queries; like: "is this or that a force among lucifer's plots?" All tied up in knots! "A holy plane beyond here, gods last home for you!" the "he or she doesn't, without life-lasting repentance and worship." Two local cooks from the kitchen, I, and the sisters I'm sure felt a coy sense of secrecy, one that told "we can't taste a thing, it's all like dirt!" in some dark transpiration. I must sink! into my chair-like a shrew, like a madwoman. "Thank you grace." The whistling of the wind through windowsill is a small call to not linger. "We must be going" saying: "thank you, may night be quiet and steady" as the folk send off in unison. A brown and blue and orange with flame picture. of a village. The dark green grass bends and hisses under our feet. Everywhere else it simply waves and whispers. Cooing and humming. Pamela- is there any concern for rain tonight? "I shouldn't think so, perhaps if we had stayed another hour." Quite bland stew. "Oh? I found it to be fine." My first conversing to Pamela. A completely content, downward, even evasive appearance. Like a woman comfortable in chains. And now I see it. It's working. Reform. For the young female blasphemer. I had heard that Pamela, for a time, went about singing songs that without fail, moved crowds to hysteria. Although there are accounts finding her composition impressive, the majoral rest were vexed that such miscalculated melody and matter were at all effective in eliciting enjoyment. Any sort of emotion but vexation. I haven't ever heard the singing. She was only tried when caught with a man and his fiddle, before a vexed, though convinced audience. Gawking aroused. Some of those with open enough mouths would stand in a finally ruled court. Open to cheering and to jeering. Springs laughter to bear witness in such an influenceable fashion. No such sights witness magic as lulling byes or va-ca revolutionary babble. oh do i hear them well? A laugh.

A loose buzzing and far, far thunder. There are two parts really, that which acts and that which is acted upon. To a determined painter, all is canvas- such purpose. The weather makes it so that from these white walls a warbling spurt, droplets into puddles of sound. Up the blue stairs of six or seven steps into the church, between the little twin gardens- with their winding weeds and bright white scopiosas. Sister Arianne unlocks the two front doors, we walk through. This sequence reminds me acutely of our synchronicity, and from then I wholly blush in unification. Sense with the sun in an utterly forespoken declaration. Remembrance, hither. Of sister ilsa and the delirium of a bird on a banister. In readings would she sit halved- to say her disposition was part correct in clenched stagnance, incorrect in wide eyed fright. Grew grimmer until the sound, perhaps the cawing of crows or finches' whistling. Either, a sure delusion, sent her irrational. How could such a noncompliant be deemed saintly? She could not. She could only be removed, once more, perhaps back home. The banisters, though painted blue, quickly dried and sun faded pink, then gray as the stump left from where they were cut extend near innumably, carrying and echoing the light and bell tower for a second floor. Facts of therein be only made by Father Nicholas. A low speaker, a stagnate, though firm, reliable and sort of wondrous. A weekly visit, quiet at dinner and service, single servicer of the bell and bulb light. Sometimes brightening, focusing, and rotating its beam toward the sea, guiding ships to and along the coast, the grass beach being a minor and makeshift port. A

man or two would walk off from their boat, over the grass and down the church basement-- or quarters, some jolt ogling out their door frames, to the fortified aperture at the end of the corridor, sister anne unlocking it and withholding whatever they bring. Nothing ever seems to exist. Of course Agatha would have you know a night market is held by Father Nicholas, distributing the goods in dark excess-- 'caco!' boxes of beets, the village has no beets, or oranges! and she lapses to faintness in recollection of quesnay or smith. I flash into repulsion at my past condescending moments as those returning from dinner, in which I desecrate the intentions and standards of. All the weights in the bag, in wake of disparage and the startling thunder. We all roll down the hill smiling and laughing. in this night's dream.

Though I awake to the thunder, and withhold begrudgingly this yearning for then. Ah! I woke up from that dream and fully realized that I didn't, and still don't have any reason. It was all I could think about that day and the three following. I thought. "When from ever did I see so rigid?" and I recall perfectly the wave of cold which spurred from the thought-- that bent out some ends and extended others. Picked beautiful contrasts, daisies and bellflowers. Built a bushel and the bees hummed, stung and taunted with their honey, brought a yearning I've only ever felt three times in my life. Though, most days after it. I yearned for a body.

## Chapter II: Days

First day: it was a revelation the breadth of my own sept-in derangement. The two fought like the last day. For one statement was met with a retort. A refutation would follow, to then receive its own retort. then and then and 'then' to follow. Lapsing in self contemplation, newly, not yet a tired, slug affair. I thought that and so foresaw it. On that light drenched day in spring, an inky black slug on the stonewalk, motioning five inches a minute, a straight ways to a plum tree through white and green grass. The slug approaches and rests at fallen fruit. The fruit lay overripe and gutted as the blackbirds had gotten to it. Now, with more clarity, I could say the complexity of being someone else, as a newly introduced issue, deterred and nullified the preposition i could be something else. Object! Thing! My hair, darker and lighter, thicker and thinner. Pulling at each little entry, most of which wet with dew or spanish sun. With the breeze, they pull, shrieking with the wind and grass, a shrieking that rang and illuminated the dark between my ears. I began to squirm. A certain discomfort or unconquerable displacement arose from my feet to my head. And to motion was to be completely shaken. I fell to the grass to watch the slug dissolving the plum. After a while I exhaled, and the slug directed its antennae to my face. Feeling about a foot and a half away. A cold touch loomed. Some minor friction upon my nose, below and around my left eye, to and past the right, then lower. Around my cheek and to my chin, where the cold touch shrank until it was no longer. In ocular contact with the slug, my stirring stilled. Until the following morning.

Second day: I felt like a frame, like mere curvature. my father and mother, incisions along the matinee. sickness cornered to one limb of the body, unholy, ungodly spoken-- to shout alone. unheard, murmuring at bread, and soup. Ignored and left to "murmur". To the miniature audience in the center of my finger: here here glory and penance, appreciate-- to assist. I only wish to help. patern, matern. o, o. go, go with mangey delicacy you wild crane. No image for the sane. gliding or sitting upon the clear water. through and out the window, a tertiary menace and a blemish on the serene, cool, spires of green light. Stretches of harsh light. A singin churns it up, from feet to feathers. Just before father leaves to trade, he plays the flute. between the flare and hum there is a churn. As mother's arms contract at the elbow, flexing in hind and fore. Her shining, pale orange skin wet with the cloth. Blue and yellow around her black hair, pigment methodry and source of pride due my grandfather whose image kneels under the plum tree. Reflective in my favorite, god— how do you say? Morada. Purple dress. I recall many flowing layers and shoulder straps that hung. Haha, all quite reflective you see, though for my dress which sunburns evermore red im not sure plums were used as dye. Anyway, Loafing beside him I listen. "Pinzona, what did the wind tell you. . . about a feathers slow falling?" to turn when I trip! " and about this season's heat?" o sun the good set fire! "and. . . to the stream? "no, father's roped the well up again." he nods between a thousand wrinkles like their own stories and paths to some destination. nods and fades into the air once more, the air which hastily dries our robes and, the air-- like a compass to points of intrigue. I went a ways out and

downhill, the water flowed quietly. Petals of harsh light. . . and on as glowing, dangerous, invigorating, vibrating white. The dread bell began ringing. Shading my eyes, scoutfully treading, out of silence as that ringing swelled. In a glistening blur, another red faced crane gaunts downstream. I didn't see my grandfather as I had expected to. Only the birds and fish-- the land and its light. Little yellow flowers. Just there momentarily, it struck me to pick some fennel. I wash it of the little white thrips and that's where I leave, minor initiative. I knew it then and now. . . the sweet, fresh bite of fennel rind in stew. And the splendor of minor initiative. Maintaining a part, awareness of wholes and your portion. Though it only seems to grow, one of many past thoughts in a journal. Reconsidered, in consideration of my place in the coven. Like an ax wedged in a tree by a blind lumberman. Though here in the church that old initiative is sorely stilled, and a fox is caged. She who should have been to spain as catherine to russia, on the coast of some barely-buoying village of banditry and blasphem-

A whinnying shriek. Like a pig's squeal, caught only at its most piercing, belching breath. A dragged drawl. All the pigs are far, too far down hill. For one of the pink things to have run up merely to whine? Oh but who else to listen to such a shallow creature but a sister? Truly, if not a sister then nobody at all, the things will go mad with silence, seeking reconciliation with each other and themselves. Pointing to, with its gray hoof or eying, with its soft- fat stomach intaking sun blemishes as it swallows wheat husks and sunflowers, her hands. All bonds then are in her hands. Between the pig and its very own mother, brood, and drove. In a clasped sisterly hand is held the pig's misplaced, though within a clasp, elusive and vital part. It feels much like its own dust or wetness. And thunder claps, late, the pig must have known!

Third day: Some angels make it back. Denizens of euphoria. Asleep, on the cloth and hay-- I saw thin gold lace enstringing strong, dropping cheeks and woefully accepting eyes, bound forever to purity. Eternally, bound. I felt myself either reaching for but a string of the luminescent metal, or out into the vacuum outside it. A spirit in a gold nest. . . crows vy out the shadows surrounding her fetal, dimming and brightening glow. It wasn't quite morning, that night I bled in my sleep. I made no sound, the horror only sent me perpetually leaping, even standing in place, that outward force and subsequent limpness. Carrying the reddened straw and skirt out the front door. All the while fearing, behind the blank instinctiveness, that I left some trail. Some distinctive mark that was ever so me. . . a me in no definite view. A self without definition. I still tend to swell at that confrontation. nothing and i, in place of each other. Though I left no trail. An orange dripping and bursting between my teeth is my following memory. Noon And mother smiling. I feel that same expressive grimness, the kind that lies beneath a face and only quietly terrorizes it around displays. Those that say a multitude of things, though the base sentiment. . . where the heart rests. may as well lie in perpetual infancy. At dusk I held her tightly and asked in what direction dandelions were blooming. She sprang up and. . . well after who knows how long, she jumped, returned, and blew the little white sprinkets all about the room, they flew as miniature ghosts, clouds, birds, and



hands. Porcelain gray flairs, whizzing past her orange face which blanketed and tucked, la desierta y las montanas, o'er the hay beds.

Fourth day: Well the light did not touch the soil, a storm alike this nights. unexpected. Slipping in over the ever effervescent blue hue, spring dew globulates and rises ghastily. The birds over branches, mass burrowed huddles of rabbits, all out of the way. Thunder frights the little things home. They must, scurry, rabidly-- ablaze with curiosity, quadrupedal though clumsy. God forgive the bipeds. the weak swimmers. For on this blessed day. I saw mama por ultima vez. Lost to the rain, perhaps washed with the stream. Though I don't know. Ah! that pig-- snout to soot!

Squealing, shrieking again. Effeminate and ugly. Damned pig. Although.

*Standing on the bed frame, peeking through the window-- sees her mother in the rain. If she ever did know, the face of this angel, what waste was her death! An eruption of giving, sewn, slipped in vane. A frown which wails 'pain'-- is the limbed dancing frame in the rain. The mother, her ghost dearly missed in the mist a supposed pig. not a swine, a swan-- am i misheard. The impression reduced to a word: mortifying. Now lying tucked tight, by the way before confrontation, biding. Feeling very seen, peered down upon by the beloved shade of relation.*

She may. . . have looked just like that. Numb and bruised blue all over. Cold and graceful. Having stood and checked. . . again, I can loosen the cage though the window opening is too small. I could leave this room and enter any other unlocked quarters, though each opening is identically caged and cramped. Facing west and counter to the hills slant, so the rain flows adjacent, hardly inward. Looking out, droplets were embracing, almost immaterial pins. upon my cheeks. . . looking out again, the droplets blend with the tears and shake up a curtain of falling, white petals which shriek into silence.





### Chapter III

On a teaching day. Populating the pugh, bodying the benches. before doors, the goodhearted, mannered, and tempered spout about obsessions, really, pre-eminently. Like practice, most though do not teach and among that mass I sit. Though I quite wish to. Lispet, coming from an Irish farmhouse knows more than the english farmers about their own crop and has even provided essential aid in questioning, trying moments. Karina can jest on the criminal and crime when village children carp on the misgivings of games. I envy the coldness of a sure face. How expectation sits them as figures in immovable judgment—moods, attitudes and biases characterize information and the fits are free! truly— as the fruit bearing bushes whose rotted excess feed— whose shit is essential to the vital and base functions of worms and beetles. And the human seams are revealed. From the elbow to the shoulder, a stitch— though i'll stop picking at my skin and start making sense. Though real incoherence, making sense? That one doesn't— the shrew, fallen ill and noncompliant to the back bench— looking tired, I know we wear the very same robes, garb and dress though she makes it look like rags soaked in excrescence. Of no particular resistance or penetrability but shit all-the-same— vapid shit.

And merriment is the decoration of each nun of the aforementioned congregation— laden, split at the hip and troubled by nothing but a mirror. And perhaps consciousness if I may be so sensitive to the fragile conditions— of the woman who holds the book tighter than any of us— as if sentient, author himself, she clutches the book graciously. well. . . here's the bid:

But god the weeping. . . i'll pass right over what it's like— the short, oblique journey to heaven. A few thoughts quite frankly. Touch of the perpetually stringed surface self, in constant pass time. Do you know it— life as leisure? On two ends, life and death— the middle is 'fun' that's all.

Like a cold touch— such phraseology penetrates the actual! And I scrape for the actual, like a fork against a plate as the rest of this dinner's guests feast. As a ghost— the delectable tangible is not but temptation. The wood against my seat and tailbone is always its own dry spectacle. . . moments like this I quite like to yawn. Moments I get to be blatantly content in his wake, where I stop in the path and stare at it— its abnormalities. How the eyes flow right over the face and map out directions to its lies and utmost sensitivities. weaknesses, vulnerabilities, and all imaginative miscommunications of some truth. . . Here are a few truths I've heard and right believe. More cries of the night, these very women. Quite like the newborn sow which scream and suckle.

*Unharmonious and barbaric. Eyes widened like the throat diphtheric, or the bloat of a greedy cleric! Buzzing, hissss-teric! Asking all beneath the very same weather— can you stand it? Each blue mirror! Though the latched locks! who hears her?— I am heard not!*

“You live a dramatic life! gone trembling to the floor at such trite concern. it is a leisurely world when one can lie and fail to even stand!” dramatic by comparison, though— “may I bawl!”

Words which felt like “she is either at home with her husband or at home with the lord and her sisters. there is nowhere else to go.” followed by a glance from sister anne. Which, to us three, simply said “leave” almost procedurally really. “Sorry, my apologies” to the concerned, instilling awareness of four blunt points— shoulders and elbows. I let my hands wring as they held them. dont judge me. I fall into the door frame, just continuing the dance— the visor of sunlight, paneled shining through the fence, glows the whole room. Dont judge me. I'm quite sure you won't but, damn it to the porous stones. Minimized to such a size that it may slip through the stones holes and the walls be mountains and the echo of friction against the walls like waterwash to a beach— the lines concave and jagged. Though the fall must end and it makes no sound— the room is not stirred and neither is my chest. But I go on with the charade— the play. With closed eyes and hands over my ears, all is reduced to vague sensation, a strong brush in physical projection— my limbs toss, rolling gracefully to the center of the floor as they clap and bow in the doorframe. I rush to look out the window, between the bars— knowing well it would be maybe twenty degrees across the sun's arch before they leave. . . I go on watching the place I know they'll be. . . your turn to perform! And actually more like forty five degrees slip by. Suddenly colder and quieter here. . . then a dozen shadows. A roar in my head. No— an unfortunate time to teach as the rain has come again though i infer village hospitality on such an occasion is warm.

Seventeen pools are formed over the plain having flattened— the shadows trudge on and by effect malform the slope. The pools though are mirrors, at such precise angles and seen with such transmutative searching that very familiar images are shown. Rabbit, brown blur in soft green weeds, purple flowers and brown brush. And there I chase. Like a wolf.

My sisters, down the hall connecting all our rooms with their pale blue doors. “My sisters, will you console me?”

*Which is conflicting as the two enjoy the company and movement of the village children on*

*teaching days after terse, though— unknowingly invited to act with an actor; could not rehearse*

*though take the roles as the ones given at birth.*

Hurriedly. I am absolutely still so to see it shift. Though as soon as i define them— they die in a way. The mirrors crack. Through this haze. . . from these bars. I can't bear to let the image rave on and in a blink it disappears. Of course the memory lingers, all memories stand like marking posts, when and when with lanterns. On such a night the rain is quite like ink and the lanterns like little candles, I usually see it like a bird. On such a night the dead and buried rise and wreak! Into a nightmare. The wild dregs crawl all along the village paths— plowed and cobble, spitting buboes of flesh, hollowed, filled with milk. Dressed in dirty rags and clamoring about regrets and failures. All the lights come out as. . . it's true isn't it? Hell is that darkness! A world reduced to danger and a few candles, she runs to the tiny glows and lesser warmth. Volatile themselves. And then does a wandering dreg. To her feet, no conversation— only frightful silence. But I suppose this is the day, I stain it all. In the red dress. I wake up at this part of the dream, as. . . I am eaten. . . or something I shouldn't see or do.